Nelle Y. McLaughlin,
Marlinton, W. Va.

Pocahontas

35

March 5, 1940

Chapter 4-- Section 3

The cooking in pioneer times was done in the old fire places. The were very large and very often took up one whole side of the room. There was usually an iron rod across the top of the fireplace and on this were iron hooks on which kettles were hung. Some of these fireplaces had iron cranes which would swing out from the fire and on which the pots were hung and then were swung back over the fire. These fireplaces were built of stone although the chimneys were seldom of stone the first summer, or year. While the pioneer was clearing his land, he would collect the stone with which to rebuild the chimney. Baking was done in front of the fire or in the coals. The ash cake was made of corn meal and the dough was shaped with the hands, then wrapped in cabbage leaves. The fire was brushed back and the cake baked in the coals. When cabbage leaves were not available, the cake was baked in the coals and the outside of the cake would be cut off and the inside of the ash cake eaten. Sometimes the dough would be flattened out on a board and set up in front of the fire to bake. There was a certain type iron skillet or pot brought in by most of the pioneers and one of these was found in nearly every home. A great deal of the meat was roasted over the open fire. The odor caused from cooking the meat in this way was probably the reason why many of the homes had the kitchens built separate from the houses.

As for salt, which was an essential and which could not be had here, the pioneer usually carried a supply when he first came. When this supply had been used, he would

Jan 17, 1940

Feb. 5, 1940

Nelle Y. McLaughlin
Marlinton, W. Va.

Pocahontas

Chapter 4--Section 3-

The home the pioneer built the first summer before the family was moved, was a very crude and rough affair. It was built with an axe and an augur and there were no nails to be used in its construction. The clearing afforded the number of logs necessary for its construction. It usually consisted of one room, sometimes two. The walls were of logs and the open spaces were filled with clay obtained by removing the rich upper soil and taking the second layer of the earth. The roof was made of clapboards held in place by straight poles weighed down by heavy stones. Whenever nails or spikes were necessary, the augur was used and wooden pins.

The chimney of these homes was never of stone the first summer. The stones would be collected along with the clearing of the land and the stone chimney would be built later. The first chimney was made of short lengths of wood built up and thoroughly daubed with mud on the inside. The floors were made of puncheons, though many preferred the earth itself for a floor. There were no windows. The door was made of split logs hewed into puncheons. It is said that the settlers became very expert with the axe and could hew timber so true that floors and doors could be made with joints as well fitted as if the boards had been sawed and planed. The sidewalls were full of portholes for defense against the Indians.

Richard Hill , for whom Hillsboro was named, came to the Little Levels from North Carolina right after the Revolution.

He built his house, which was very elaborate for pioneer times on a good farm in the neighborhood of Lobelia. He married Nancy McNeel, daughter of the pioneer John McNeel. His house was built of hewed logs, and the space between was filled with wood, mortar or mud, and then whitewashed. It had three porches, two tall chimneys and eight rooms. Simon Girty, the renegade, told that the Indians were so impressed with the fine display of the home of Mr. Hill that they called him the white man's king.

The furnishings of these pioneer homes were very simple and rough and homemade. Frequently big slabs were used for tables and three legged stools for chairs. Piffs in the wall were used for wardrobes.

Our pioneers were a strong, fearless race. After the early settlers had crossed the mountains and settled in this county, there was a striking increase of weight and height accomplished in a single generation. A man six feet tall was of ordinary stature. This is accounted for by their outdoor life, regular habits and rough healthful foods.

The pioneer woman was almost physically perfect. They would undergo the perils of maternity and not lose a day from their work. They were fearless and equal to any emergency. This is well illustrated by the story of Martha McNeel, wife of John McNeel. She was left at home while her husband and every other able bodied man in the Little Levels went to the battle of Point Pleasant. During his absence a child was born to her and soon afterwards died. The mother prepared the coffin, dug the

grave and buried it unaided.

Mary Vance Warwick, while her husband was in the army of the Revolution, went from the stockade alone to her own home four miles away through the forest. She discovered a large Indian war party and was able to take the news to the fort and prevent its surprise.

Many of the pioneers crossed the mountain on foot and carried back such supplies as were absolutely necessary and could not be obtained at home. After the formation of this county, according to records at the Court House, a load of salt would be brought in and distributed among the settlers. But most of the supplies were carried in by pack horse. This became a great business in pioneer days and the horse owners were very angry when the wagons came and began to take away their trade.